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# PUBLIC POWER

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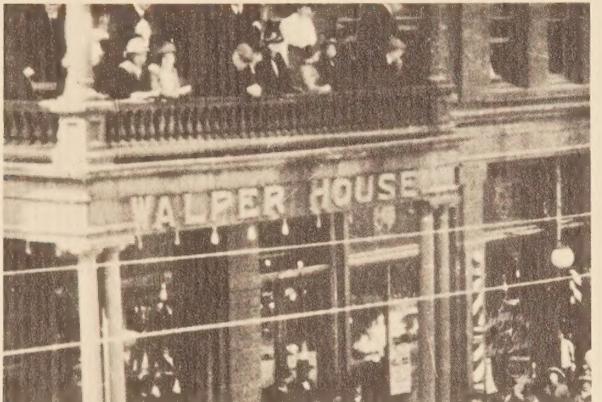
A brief history of Ontario Hydro's first 75 years

BY GORDON DONALDSON

*Gordon Donaldson is a well-known Toronto journalist and television producer and the author of several Canadian historical books, the latest being Niagara: The Eternal Circus.*

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*Where it all began: The awesome might of Niagara Falls inspired 25 men to meet in Kitchener, Ont., in 1902 to create a utility that would be known as Ontario Hydro.*



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**THE WALPER HOUSE** in Kitchener was known throughout Southern Ontario for its generous German meals and reasonable prices. You got your money's worth. The twenty-five small businessmen and municipal representatives who met there on June 9, 1902 got that and more. For two dollars a head (five of them got away with one dollar) they had an all-day meeting, with lunch in Walper's oak-panelled dining room, and paid a speaker from Toronto. There they launched a crusade to capture the magic force of electricity from its private owners and make it serve the common man. And, eventually, they got a unique institution; one of the largest publicly-owned utilities in the world: Ontario Hydro.

They did not look like crusaders, those solid burghers of the city then known as Berlin, and the small towns around, as they left the hotel replete with sausage and schnitzel. But they burned with a religious fervor for the new cause of cheap public power. From the start, Hydro was more than soulless wire and pylons; it was an ideal, sacred to its disciples and profane to the existing power barons and their shareholders. Its battles were fought with evangelical zeal. Its missionaries rode forth to the villagers and farmers preaching domestic joy and financial salvation through public power.

Hydro stirred passions on all sides. It still does today, when public power is taken for granted and electricity is an essential of life. Demonstrators parade outside nuclear power plants, shouting against a new force they fear in much the same way as the farmers of the early 1900s feared the high-voltage wires humming over their fields.

For Hydro deals with savage forces. It stirs them to ferocity in massive turbines tormented by falling water or live steam created by coal-fired boilers or the shiny tubes of nuclear reac-

tors, then tames them to propel machines, provide light or pop toasters. The first was the awesome might of Niagara Falls.

To the Walper House men, Niagara was the fount of all the power they or their descendants would ever need. Twenty years earlier the European engineering genius Wilhelm Siemens had estimated that the Canadian Falls alone could generate as much power as all the coal mined in the world. And that power was Ontario's birthright, for the British Privy Council had ruled that it belonged to the province, not the Dominion of Canada.

But Ontario had sold its birthright to the Americans. U.S. power companies held franchises on the output of the Canadian Falls for 50 to 100 years although they had yet to build the first major generator on the Canadian side. Most of that hydro power was earmarked for the United States. Ontario, it seemed, was doomed to pay through the nose forever for electricity made by imported coal. To add insult to injury the province, which had no coal of its own, was having to ship coal from Wales at three times the normal prices because, in 1902, the Pennsylvania miners were on strike.

The Walper House men were tantalized by the thought of all that cheap Niagara power just beyond their grasp. Industries were booming on the American side of the Niagara River, fed by new American hydro-electric stations. Ontario's fledgling factories couldn't compete. Ontario farmers were still trimming the wicks of their kerosene lamps and chopping wood for the winter.

The new industrial revolution which was passing Ontario by began on the evening of November 15, 1896 when the Mayor of Buffalo threw the switch that brought an amazing surge of power twenty miles from Niagara Falls, N.Y. to light his city. It was the first long-distance trans-

mission of electricity for commercial purposes. The best brains of Europe and America had worked for decades to achieve it. Eventually Nicola Tesla came up with an efficient alternating current system and the American inventor, George Westinghouse, developed it. He built 5,000 horsepower AC generators when only 150 horsepower ones existed. General Electric built transformers a hundred times more powerful than any in use and strung wires to carry an unheard-of 11,000 volts.

**Niagara was tamed.** It only remained to gouge giant caverns behind the much-more-powerful Canadian Falls, lair of the legendary Thunder God of the Neutral Indians, put in power stations, and everyone would live happily, electrically, ever after. In the United States, anyway . . .

Ontario yearned to live electrically. It rapidly developed an appetite for the invisible power. Steam-driven generators were running mills and lighting a few main streets in the 1880s. By 1890 hardly a village of over 3,000 was without an electric light station of some kind.

Toronto boasted a flashy electric street railway one mile long. And an entrepreneur was demonstrating a quarter-horsepower electric motor that turned a coffee-grinder. This, he claimed, would reduce woman's drudgery in the home. A local minister promptly denounced it as an invention of the Devil — it would free girls from honest toil to ply Satan's trade in the streets.

**That was Toronto.** If something was condemned from the pulpit it must be catching on . . .

At Niagara, the forces of good won a splendid victory which brought peculiar results. The legal battle which gave Ontario possession of the Canadian Falls was fought not to establish power

stations but to preserve Niagara's beauty by setting aside land for a park. A new authority, now the Niagara Parks Commission, cleaned out the worst of the tawdry tourist traps on the riverbank, banned liquor and gambling, then ran short of cash. The provincial government, having done its bit for beauty was reluctant to hand out more. So the parks commission sold hydro power franchises to industry — American industry. As most of the power produced would be fed to factories on the American side, the Canadian bank would remain an unspoiled Eden.

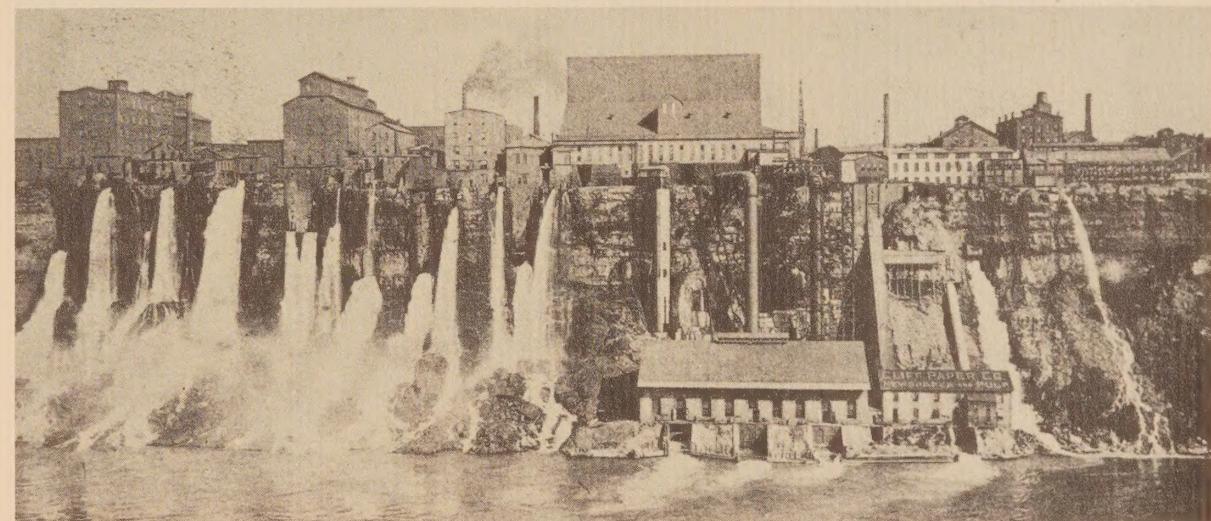
But the forces were gathering for a long war over Ontario's bartered birthright.

A Toronto group known as the Mackenzie Syndicate joined in the development of Canadian Niagara power and obtained its own franchise in 1903 from the solidly private-enterprise Liberal government of Premier George W. Ross. Headed by William Mackenzie, a railroad builder, it included Henry Pellatt, the broker who nearly went broke building his dream castle, Casa Loma, and Frederic Nicholls, a pioneer

electrical developer given to talking of a force that would "fly invisibly and mystically through slender copper wires". There was nothing mystical about the Syndicate. It was tough. It controlled the Toronto Electric Power Company and the Toronto Street Railway, the biggest users of electricity in the province. And it would fight a running battle with the supporters of public power for nineteen years.

**It was a strange conflict.** The public power forces, labelled "socialists" by money men in London and New York, included Conservative Opposition leader James Whitney, some very conservative members of the Toronto Board of Trade (among them industrialist Hart Massey, chief of the Massey clan), newspaper editors of all political persuasions, smalltown businessmen and rural visionaries. The civic leaders of Toronto, which the country folk called Hogtown and viewed as the symbol of piggish greed, wanted a public utility.

Toronto's application was not only turned



In 1907 this generating station, owned by Niagara Falls Power Company, produced an impressive 35,000 horsepower.

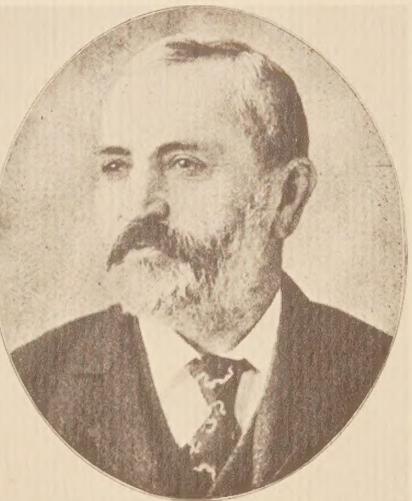


*Adam Beck*

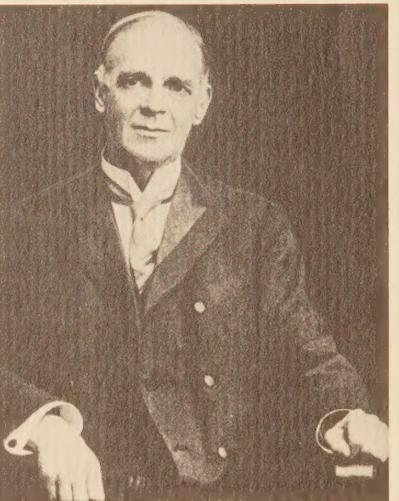
...the late convert became the greatest evangelist of the cause...



*Daniel B. Detweiler*



*E. W. B. Snider*



*F. S. Spence*

down by Ross's government; the Legislature passed a bill prohibiting any municipality from competing with a private company unless it bought the company out at a price fixed by arbitration. The big city was losing the fight against the private power barons when the smalltowners took it up at the Walper House.

The organizers of that fateful meeting were E. W. B. Snider of St. Jacobs and D. B. Detweiler of Berlin, both descendants of German-Swiss immigrants but cast from different moulds. Detweiler was the prophet, wobbling from village to village on his bicycle, preaching the word — cheap electricity — to anyone who would listen. Snider, an adroit politician, persuaded mutually-suspicious small businessmen they had to stand together or be bled individually by the Syndicate.

**The keynote speaker**, Alderman Frank Spence of Toronto, entered the hotel at his usual speed — fast. He was a hustler, so active that he leaned forward when he walked. Friends said he had to hurry to keep up with himself or he'd fall over on his face. Spence was an ardent Liberal, Methodist and Prohibitionist and one of the first proponents of public power. He presented the crucial resolution: that a government commission be set up to control the transmission of power to municipalities who wanted it, issuing its own bonds to cover the cost of lines, the bonds to be covered by the bonds of the municipalities concerned. The meeting endorsed this and set up a 21-man action committee, including Snider, Detweiler and Spence.

The Hydro revolution began.

The man who would lead it to success was still wondering whether to join. Adam Beck, prosperous manufacturer, Mayor of London and Conservative member of the Legislature did not come out for public power until 1903, when

he attended a meeting of the Snider-Detweiler committee. But the late convert became the greatest evangelist of the cause and its toughest warrior.

"He was a hard man and sometimes brutal," his friend and biographer W. R. Plewman wrote. "He was anything but pleasant in a number of his personal contacts [but] a man of greater refinement and tenderness could not have mastered the alliance between predatory interests and pliant politicians and given Ontario the cheapest hydro-electric power system in the world and the greatest publicly-owned system".

As Beck arrived on the scene, Premier Ross was wavering. The press was after him. Far too often he encountered editorials like Toronto World editor W. F. Maclean's message to his readers: "You're only farmers. That's what you are! What right had a hayseed to electric energy? . . . The government and the Legislature at Queen's Park are not [there] to look after the citizen. Their duty is to the capitalists and monopolists, to give them everything the citizen owns. They hold his hands while the power grafters shake out his pockets."

Ross tossed a small bone to the public power agitators. He set up a commission to investigate the possibilities of supplying electricity to places within 150 miles of Niagara. Snider was chairman and Beck a member. Two years later the Liberals were swept from office and Conservative Premier Whitney declared: "The water power of Niagara should be free as air. [It] should not in the future be treated as the sport and prey of capitalists." Beck became minister without portfolio (unofficial Minister of Power) and chaired a new commission of inquiry.

**In the spring of 1906**, fifteen hundred demonstrators marched, four-deep, from Toronto City Hall to Queen's Park demanding cheap power — now! They waved banners bearing the names



*In April 1906, a delegation demanding cheap power marched from Toronto's city hall to Queen's Park.*

of their home towns, ranging from Sarnia to Kingston. They were revolutionaries, but not the ragged sort who would storm the Czar's Winter Palace. Most of them were Tories. Beck the showman had organized the demonstration to support his plan to create The Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario.

The Legislature passed his bill and on June 7 Adam Beck took his seat as chairman of the Hydro Commission. He now had the political power he wanted but no electrical power at all. It would take him four years to get his first power line and eight to acquire his first generator.

Meanwhile, on the day after he introduced his Hydro bill, the Syndicate laid the cornerstone of its new powerhouse at Niagara which would supply Toronto through its 60,000 volt transmission line. The private power lobby called Beck a visionary, dreamer and crackpot, knowing he was none of these. He was ruthlessly efficient. But he recruited young dream-

ers to the crusade. Municipalities still had to be won over. Diverse teams of students, young engineers, quiet housewives and militant suffragettes canvassed the towns and villages.

The campaign reached its height with the Toronto election of New Year's Day 1908 when voters, unswayed by the Syndicate's anti-Hydro



*The year was 1905 and the 11 men pictured here were the full complement of a "line gang" at that time.*



This is how, in 1907, a Toronto Niagara Power Co. crew erected poles for a 12,000-volt transmission line.

billboards, went for public power. Thirteen other towns and cities followed.

Syndicate agents followed the Hydro missionaries out into the countryside to frighten farmers along the route of Hydro's proposed transmission line. Their line, they said, carried a safe 60,000 volts while the public wire would attempt to handle a terrifying 110,000. If it didn't actually fall down and burn the farmer to a crisp it might shrivel his crops and have weird effects on his cows. No one would buy milk from hysterical cows, even if you could milk them. Despite these scare tactics Hydro got its

rights-of-way, but they cost twice as much as the Commission had expected to pay. And to calm the fears of the farmers, the transmission towers were built more strongly than necessary and carried twice the required number of insulators.

As the towers marched out from Niagara, the private power lobby mounted an international press campaign against Ontario's "dangerous socialist experiment." According to respected financial journals in London and New York, the money men were appalled by the province's looting of private property. The credit of Can-

ada was in danger, they wrote, and outside capital would shun the country.

**The editor of Toronto's Saturday Night** replied: "If English capitalists are going to rise like a covey of scared partridges and quit the country whenever citizens stand up suddenly and object to being skinned, then let them scare."

On October 11, 1910, Beck staged his first ceremonial switch-on of Hydro electricity, purchased from the American-owned Ontario Power Company, but carried on his own line. It was his triumph so, naturally, he staged it in Kitchener where it all began.

Horse-drawn buggies and a few automobiles brought farmers and notables from miles around to the hockey rink. Premier Whitney came from Toronto by special train. Beck, not to be outdone, took another train. Hilda Rumpel, a little girl in her party dress, brought the premier a switch — The Switch! — on a velvet cushion. Graciously, or perhaps cautiously, remembering that 110,000 volts and the might of Niagara was somewhere behind it along the line, the Premier allowed Beck to press it. Suddenly a festival of lights glowed in the stadium and in the street outside bulbs spelled out the message: "For the People".

Berlin went as wild as a sedate town could. At a dinner that night Beck entered to the strains of *See the Conquering Hero Comes*. For an emotional moment he lost his voice.

Whitney reviewed the battles of the past eight years: "We have been attacked, vilified, slandered. Large sums of money have been expended in creating and fomenting prejudice and ill-feeling against us. And still larger sums have been expended in conducting a campaign against us outside of Ontario . . . men and influences from the humblest man in the land up to the Prime Minister of Great Britain were

FOR THE PEOPLE





*A top-hatted Adam Beck and his wife shared a back seat with provincial treasurer A. J. Matheson in 1910 at the inauguration of hydro service in Kitchener. Hydro now had the initiative, but the battles were far from over.*

approached in an endeavour to destroy our power legislation . . . we have been told it would destroy the credit of Ontario and indeed of Canada."

The battles were far from over. But Hydro now had the power and the initiative.

**The Toronto switch-on** was a shambles. Thousands stampeded outside City Hall. The police lost control. Women fainted and children were crushed. Premier Whitney, unable to make himself heard over the tumult, cut short his speech, and handed the switch to Adam Beck. A miniature Niagara Falls with real water had been built over the City Hall portico. As Beck pressed, the lights came on and so did the water. It drenched

the top-hatted dignitaries below. They retreated inside to dry off. There the premier finished his speech while ambulance men treated the victims of Toronto's enthusiasm.

Beck's famous Hydro "Circus" is still remembered in Ontario although it only played one season, the fall of 1912. Two "circuses" each consisting of two horse-drawn covered wagons, lumbered through the hinterlands, one carrying a motor and cables to hook up to power lines, the other a step-down transformer. This equipment was so heavy that bridges had to be checked out before the convoy crossed and the teams of horses changed frequently. Later, the wagons were followed by a three-ton truck car-

rying the latest electric appliances, from washing-machines to vacuum cleaners to saws. The arrival of the Circus was a memorable event in village life. Hydro showmen delighted the women by demonstrating the exciting new household machines and lectured the men on the requirements of an electrified farm (one 20 candlepower lamp to every three cows).

Among them was "illuminations engineer" Harry Crerar, who had founded Hydro's research laboratories in a one-bench workshop. Later, as General H. D. G. Crerar, he would command the First Canadian Army in World War Two. His first field command was the Circus caravan that toured country fairs.

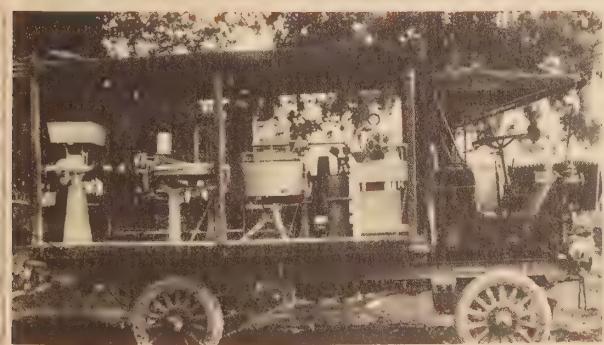
Beck followed his travelling show around, a stern, bowler-hatted figure, stiffly seated in the back seat of a large Pierce-Arrow roadster. He was determined to keep boys and girls on the farm by making farm life more attractive through electricity. Every village should become an industrial centre, he declared. Factories must be spread out rather than clustered around city slums. He was selling hope rather than electricity, for he had neither the money nor the generating capacity to supply every hamlet. But the farmers had votes. They could pressure Queen's Park into subsidizing rural lines which the municipalities could not afford. That was the real purpose of the Circus. It cost about \$25,000 — less than most television commercials today — but was abandoned as too expensive.

In 1914 Beck received his knighthood — the Power Knight, he was called — and built his first generating station, a little 750 kilowatt hydro plant at Wasdell Falls on the Severn River. Big Chute, also on the Severn, was purchased from a private company. Hydro was now producing its own power for 104 municipal systems, compared with the 12 original partners in 1910. With the new demands of the Great War,



## BECK'S HYDRO CIRCUS

Above: Adam Beck's famous "travelling circus" consisted of two units, each with two covered horse-drawn wagons hauling motors and transformers. Right: Even school children were given a holiday when the circus' electric milking machine visited rural areas. Below: Electrical equipment ranging from a circular saw to a washing machine was carried on this three-ton Gram truck as part of Beck's road show.





Wasdell Falls generating station, the first designed and built by the Commission, began operation in 1914.



In 1919 this was the dinnertime routine for workmen then building the Commission's Queenston-Chippawa plant.

it would have to produce a lot more. As industry was mobilized to back the war effort the demand for electricity from Niagara tripled in four years. Hydro bought more power from the still-hostile Syndicate but that wasn't enough. Beck sent engineers and surveyors into the Niagara gorge to find a site for the mightiest power station in the world. They found it on the rock face at Queenston.

By taking water from the upper Niagara River at Chippawa and feeding it into a canal that skirted the Falls and delivered it to the clifftop twelve miles downstream, Hydro could create its own waterfall almost twice the height of the natural Falls. It would plummet 294 feet to turbines down in the gorge with between two and three times the force of water at the Falls. Because of the staggering cost of the scheme — then estimated at \$20 million — and because Hydro lacked the authority to produce its own power on such a scale, the scheme was put to a province-wide plebiscite.

**It was physically daunting** and financially scary. Ontarians had never built the world's biggest anything. They left that sort of thing to the Yankees. But there was a war on. Prodigious efforts were required. And there was Beck, lobbying, patting shoulders and talking, talking.

The voters approved.

Hydro did the construction work itself, and Hydro engineers designed the special equipment needed. Two thousand men, at an average wage of \$35 a week, just to dig the canal, moved five times as much material as was used to build the Great Pyramid. Then they had to reverse the flow of the Welland River by widening and deepening four miles of it, and build the cathedral-like powerhouse itself.

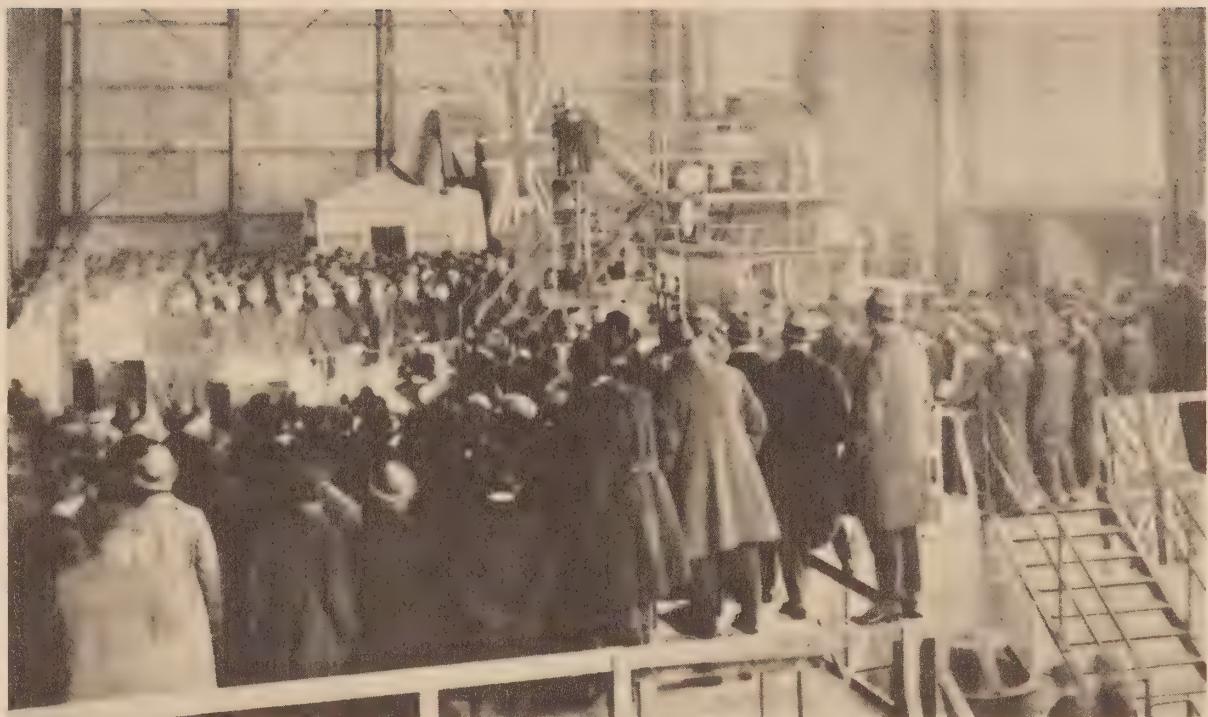
The first unit began producing in 1921 but the Queenston plant was not finished until 1930.



Men doing maintenance work near Dunville, 1919.



The immensity of building and paving a canal for the Queenston-Chippawa plant is evident in this photo.



Ontario Premier E. C. Drury and Adam Beck's daughter, Marion, opened the Queenston-Chippawa plant in 1921.

Total cost was \$76 million.

Sir Adam Beck did not live to see the final completion of his great monument, or the final bill. He died on August 15, 1925, having won most of his battles but still unsure of final victory.

**On his deathbed** he said: "I had hoped to live to forge a band of iron around the Hydro to prevent its destruction by politicians." He added: "Watch what they do when I'm gone."

He had beaten the Syndicate, which sold Hydro its Niagara power station and most of its assets in 1922. He had survived royal commission inquiries into his leadership and his one last battle, an attempt to build an electric interurban railway system, an enterprise that

was before its time that even his supporters wouldn't support. He had begun to fulfil his promise to bring electricity to the remote hamlets by achieving subsidies for rural districts and he had planted the seeds of the St. Lawrence Seaway and Power Project as far back as 1913. Drawing on his long association with the municipalities, and with their strong support, he had created a unique provincial-municipal electrical system that continues today. With an effective mixture of fanaticism and political opportunism, and above all with flair, he had well and truly led the Hydro crusade for twenty-two years.

When he died Hydro was the biggest power operation of its kind in the world with the world's biggest hydro-electric station. Still it was

short of power to fill the appetite it had created. The politicians Beck feared would destroy Hydro leaned on its successor, Charles A. Magrath, demanding that it grow even bigger. Magrath, trained as a surveyor and administrator, was a quietly efficient manager, a complete contrast to the loud, flamboyant Beck. Hydro was now a big business. The crusade was over, and its symbol, Niagara Falls, was no longer the everlasting Great Provider of electricity. Magrath had to look elsewhere.

The view to the north was bleak. Hydro had begun to tap the generous water-proof of Northern Ontario by building a plant at Cameron Falls on the Nipigon River — and learned that northern developments took immense effort and, more important, time. Magrath needed kilowatts in a hurry. To the east flowed the broad St. Lawrence, undisturbed by power projects because years of negotiation between the United States and Canada, with Ontario and New York chiming in, had produced no agreement about who should harness it.

But Quebec had a surplus of power produced by private companies on the Gatineau and Ottawa Rivers. Magrath contracted to buy electricity from them. This would cause a major ruckus in the mid-thirties.

The dynamos hummed ever faster until the economic fuse blew and the Great Depression dimmed the lights all over North America. In 1931, Hydro had a surplus of power for the first time but three years later, demand was picking up again. That was the year Liberal Premier Mitch Hepburn, the young onion farmer from Elgin County roared into office determined to clean out all that alleged messes left by 29 years of Tory government. One was Hydro. To cut the commission down to size, he reduced its projected new head office building on Toronto's University Avenue from 17 storeys to six. And

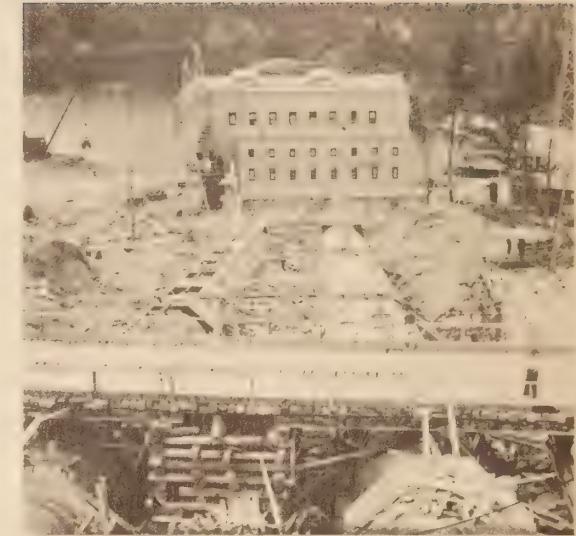
he repudiated its contracts with the Quebec power companies by an Act of the Legislature, causing alarm and dismay among bankers and in the Federal government.

He chose as Hydro chairman Stewart Lyon, editor of the Toronto Globe, and ordered him to get "the politicians" (meaning Tory politicians) out of Hydro. Two commissioners and some top Hydro engineers were fired and Hepburn ordered a new royal commission inquiry (one of seven commissions he set up to probe Tory iniquities). But once the shouting died down, Hydro went on much as before. The new royal commission, like those before it, failed to prove that it was badly mismanaged or a political toy. The Quebec contracts were restored because Ontario needed the power. And the new headquarters building soared to seventeen storeys.

**Lyon**, a long-time Beck supporter, made some remarkable speeches in the Beck tradition. In 1936, when television had barely been invented and was unseen in Canada, he told an agricultural fair audience in New Hamburg that TV would make for contentment and stability and keep people on the farm. Watching it, the farmer would enjoy life just as much as the city-dweller.

Hydro expanded northward, using horse teams, canoes, York boats and, for the first time, light aircraft, to drive transmission lines through hundreds of miles of virgin forest, reaching mines at Copper Cliff and Red Lake. The power which had begun in the lair of the Thunder God at Niagara reached the home of the Manitou, the Great Spirit of the Hurons, on Manitoulin Island.

Just when Ontario Hydro was reporting "ample supplies of power secured for some years ahead", Hitler invaded Poland and a new scramble of kilowatts began. About 25 per cent of Hydro's production went into the war effort.



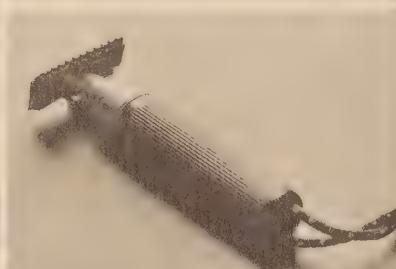
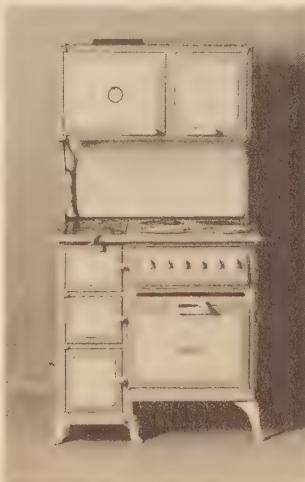
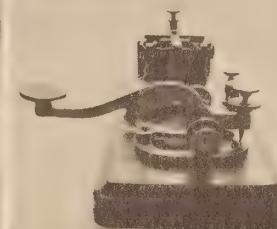
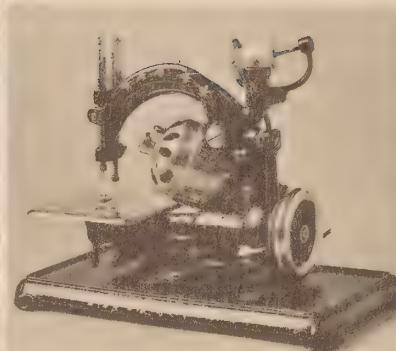
August 19, 1942 — the date of the Dieppe Raid — was blistering hot on the Madawaska River site as Hydro's Barrett Chute plant neared completion.

The Niagara turbines roared around the clock.

Peace came, and the turbines relaxed during the day to allow enough water to flow over the Falls to content the tourists. Beauty must be served, but the beat of industry was demanding even more power in the postwar expansion period. Hydro immediately launched eight major hydro-electric developments in southern, eastern and northern Ontario. But the consumer wanted a different kind of electricity with lights that didn't flicker. Beck's first contract with the Ontario Power Company had locked a large part of Southern Ontario into a flickering 25-cycle system which was now old-fashioned and out of step with the more efficient 60-cycle system adopted by most of North America. As Mayor of Toronto, Robert Hood Saunders demanded a complete changeover to modern 60-cycle power. When he became Hydro chairman in 1948 he was determined to get it.

Engineers estimated it would cost \$190 mil-

## THE WAY THEY WERE



*A number of fascinating but easily identified electrical appliances dating back to 1909: toaster, telephone, washing machine, radio, stove, sewing machine, razor, typewriter, iron, Morse Code keyboard, lightbulb.*



Hundreds of people turned out on May 14, 1956 for a gala celebration of Ontario Hydro's 50th anniversary at the Memorial Auditorium in Kitchener — birthplace of the utility.



Queen Elizabeth, Prince Philip and Hydro chairman James Duncan officiated in 1960 at the opening of the Robert H. Saunders generating station on the St. Lawrence Seaway.

lion to convert Toronto alone; some unthinkable amount to change the rest. They underestimated Bob Saunders.

Once again, it was the biggest project of its kind ever undertaken. But so what? Ontarians now knew they could do such things. With Bob Saunders, a forceful, unstoppable optimist, everything was possible. He elbowed objectors

aside, the Legislature authorized Hydro to fund the changeover and in January, 1949, electricians began converting or replacing seven million appliances to 60 cycle. Every motor had to be rewired or replaced. Many were simply replaced. Hydro offered "new lamps for old" as in the tale of Aladdin. In this case, Aladdin wasn't cheated. The new equipment was better. The entire conversion cost \$352 million.

In 1950, the 25th anniversary of Beck's death, the Queenston plant was renamed Sir Adam Beck — Niagara GS No. 1 and work began on No. 2, an even mightier task, on the cliff beside its brother. The way had been cleared by a treaty between Canada and the United States spelling out how much water could be diverted from the river by both sides.

When Beck 2 was completed in 1958, the Canadian Falls had given their all. The last great untapped source was the St. Lawrence. Canada and the U.S. had dickered over a combined seaway and power project for 30 years but nothing had come of it. In 1950, Canada determined to go it alone. The announcement by Prime Minister Louis St. Laurent first astounded the Americans, then jolted them into action. Four years later President Dwight Eisenhower signed a seaway authorization bill and the two nations began to harness the great river.

Bob Saunders and his American counterpart Robert Moses, chairman of The Power Authority of the State of New York, had driven the scheme through. Saunders did not see it completed. At midnight on January 14, 1955, his twin-engined light aircraft, wings and fuselage heavy with ice, crashed in a field short of the airport at London, Ontario. He died the next day.

By 1956, its golden jubilee year, and with the completion of the St. Lawrence power development just a few years away, Hydro was now without major hydraulic sites. It was turning back to steam produced by coal while looking ahead to the age of nuclear power. It had 65 hydro stations and two coal-fired stations. Construction was beginning on a nuclear demonstration plant at Rolphton on the Ottawa River.

The nuclear age was about to begin.



# The 1960s and 1970s — challenging and changing decades

## EPILOGUE

**The 1960s and 1970s** were to prove challenging and changing decades for Ontario Hydro — and not only because of nuclear controversy.

The arrival of natural gas from the west in the late 1950s ushered in a new competitive energy era in Ontario symbolized by the Corporation's Live Better Electrically slogan. Until the later part of the 1960s, when hydro-electric generation still predominated, the unit cost of power to Hydro customers fell as consumption went up. It was the style of the times: the economy was booming, technology was the new theosophy. The twentieth century was finally Canada's.

In 1964, the government of Ontario announced, with Hydro, the decision to proceed with the Pickering nuclear development — marking the province's commitment to nuclear energy. Using Ontario's rich uranium resources to produce electricity, said Premier John Robarts, was like finding a dozen new Niagaras. Indeed it was, for by 1980 close to one-third of Ontario's electricity would come from nuclear-electric units.

By this time, Hydro had become electrically

synchronized with an interconnecting grid involving Canadian and United States utilities. Following the great power blackout of north-eastern North American in 1965, these links were strengthened to improve reliability. In later years these links were to earn Ontario millions of dollars in the sale of surplus power to hungry American utilities.

The exuberant 1960s also saw the completion of a major coal-fired station, further development of hydro-electric sites in the north, commitments to an oil-fired plant in the balmy pre-OPEC days, plans for more nuclear, and a beginning of the extra high voltage transmission grid for the province. As the 1970s approached, change was in the wind.

In 1969 bulk power rates began to rise dramatically. Fuel costs and rising interests rates were the main culprits. Concern about diminishing resources, worries about the environment, and demands for greater involvement in the planning of new power facilities and lines would drastically change the world in which Hydro lived. Also to change were the Corpora-

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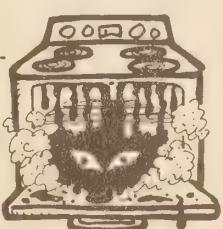
THE HYDRO MUNICIPALITIES OF

*In 1958, Hydro ads encouraged electrical use. Today, the conservation ethic predominates.*

## Look who's stealing your electricity.



A dirty air filter collects dust, grease and grime makes it far more difficult to move air and harder to draw air through. Just soaking the filter in mild soap or detergent will fix this energy waster.



Grease and burnt-on food really reduce your oven's efficiency. A clean oven works better and uses less electricity.

Try putting tin foil on the oven bottom. It catches bits of food and grease for easy cleaning and it's a good heat reflector too.

### Use Energy Wisely

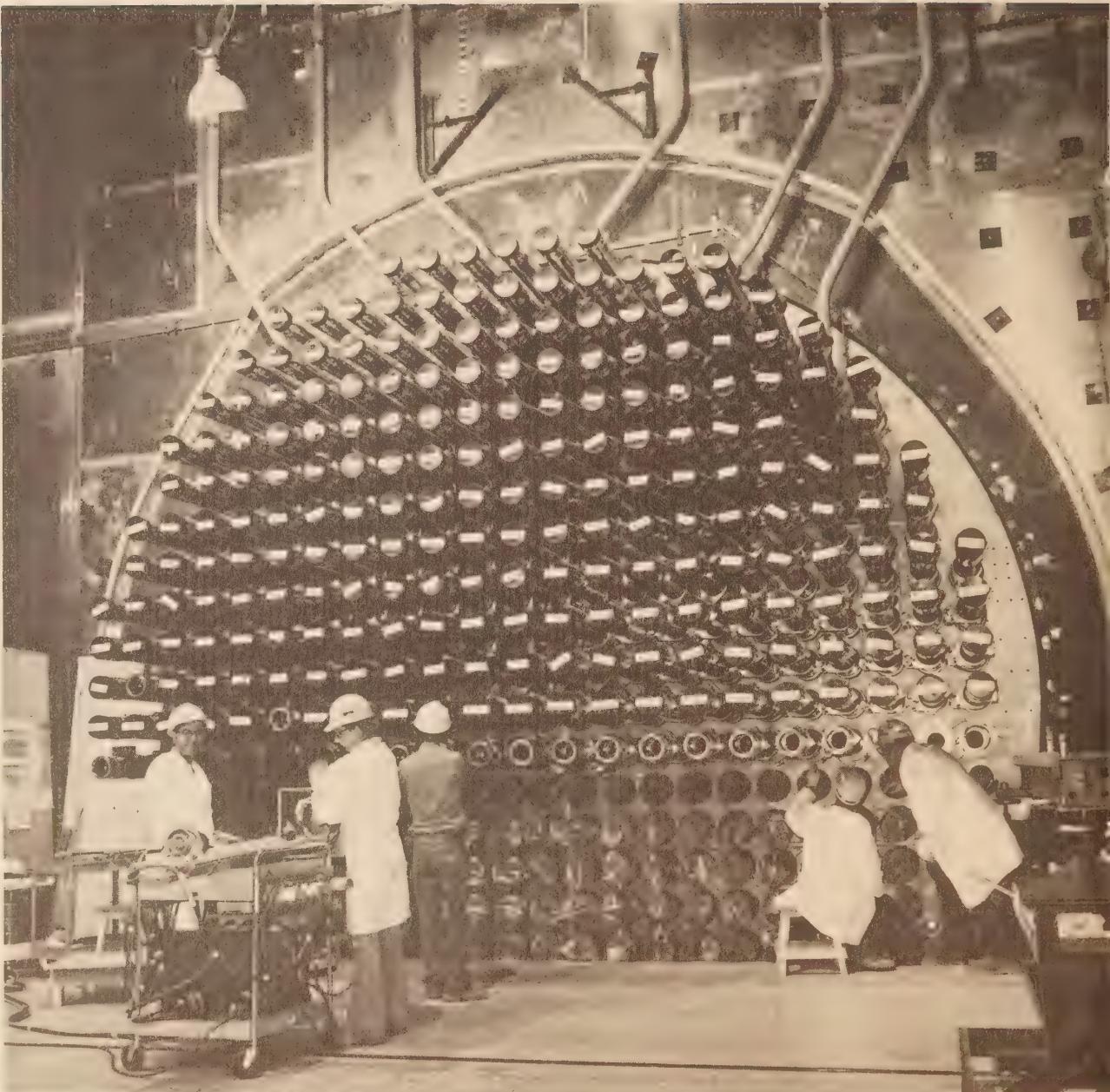
Take up, clean up. It's simple. Appliances that are clean and well cared for last longer and use less electricity. Over the long run, you can save money on appliance replacement. And of course, the less energy you waste, the more dollars you save.

Don't waste your energy.



ontario hydro

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*The face of the nuclear age: Hydro technicians work on the calandria face of a reactor at the Pickering B plant.*

## “And there was the hydro, blazing all over the place.”

tion's relationships with its customers, the government and the municipal utility systems.

All these forces led the provincial government to establish, in 1971, a Task Force to examine Hydro's role in the future. Its recommendations were to turn Hydro from a commission to a Crown corporation overseen by a Board of Directors representing almost every segment of Ontario's population.

The Task Force concluded that Hydro's traditional mandate of “power at cost” has served Ontario well. “The co-operative partnership between Ontario Hydro, the municipalities and the government of Ontario has been a dramatic success story,” the Task Force reported. “One of the most rapid rates of industrialization in the world has been served and facilitated and Ontario residents have been provided with electricity at very low rates compared with other provinces and the United States . . . At the same time, Ontario Hydro has achieved a reputation among its peers as a world leader.”

But as rates continued to rise, opposition parties in the Legislature — with support from the news media — demanded broader public

examination of Hydro's policies and practices. In 1974 the government responded, ordering Hydro to justify its proposed rate increases under a full-dress public review process before the Ontario Energy Board. Two years later an extensive, five-year review of Ontario's electrical future was launched by the Royal Commission on Electric Power Planning.

Despite these independent reviews, the Legislative opposition was not satisfied, so in 1975 the government formed a Select Committee to investigate Hydro's proposed rate increase. That committee's findings further fuelled opposition criticism and, in 1977, the government — then in a minority position — agreed to the formation of a Select Committee on Hydro Affairs.

As the 1970s drew to a close, water power was no longer king. Uranium and coal were now providing about one-third each of Ontario's electricity. Yet still another set of circumstances were emerging to challenge Hydro in the 1980s. Energy was a key issue on the public agenda and conservation of energy was the imperative. The success of conservation programs launched in the 1970s, the effects of higher electrical prices

on consumption patterns and a sagging economy harassed by unremitting inflation pushed growth rates down, forcing Hydro to stretch its construction programs.

And so, in its 75th year, Ontario Hydro continues to face the vagaries of politics, economics and social attitudes. At the same time, it continues to reflect the determination of those 25 businessmen and municipal representatives who met in the Walper House: public power to serve the common man. Today that mandate is carried out by more than 28,000 Ontario Hydro employees with a success rate unique in the public service that surely bespeaks a dedication equally unique in that sector.

But the success story that is Ontario Hydro is probably best stated in an obituary that captured Sir Adam Beck at his evangelistic best: “He was speaking in a church at Norwich on the theme ‘Let there be light.’ And there was the hydro while he talked, blazing all over the place.”



## ONTARIO HYDRO CHAIRMEN 1906 - 1981



Sir Adam Beck  
1906 — 1925



Charles A. Magrath  
1925 — 1931



Hon. John R. Cooke  
1931 — 1934



T. Stewart Lyon  
1934 — 1937



Dr. Thomas H. Hogg  
1937 — 1947



Robert H. Saunders  
1948 — 1955



Dr. R. L. Hearn  
1955 — 1956



James S. Duncan  
1956 — 1961



W. Ross Strike  
1961 — 1966



George E. Gathercole  
1966 — 1974



Robert B. Taylor  
1975 — 1979



Hugh L. Macaulay  
1979 —



